

Ray Dudley #102
July 17, 1985

Q: Mr. Dudley, when did you first join the Army or the Air Corps?

A: Well, in June, 1935.

Q: What was your first assignment?

A: My first assignment was at Randolph [*Field*] and then after that why I went over to Honolulu.

Q: When did you come to Honolulu?

A: June, 1939.

Q: What was your first assignment when you got to Honolulu?

A: My first assignment was they, at that time, they had not finished building Hickam Field, the barracks and what not, and we stayed over at Ford Island in the huts. And then after we moved over to Hickam Field, I was assigned as an air mechanic and engineer.

After doing that for about a year, then I taught mechanics in a school. Then after that I went back to being a flight engineer.

Q: What was your daily routine like just prior to the Dec. 7th attack?

A: Daily routine was more or less as usual. You wake up at a certain time and you go with all the rest of the troops to your duty station which was in the hangars at Hickam Field, where all the airplanes were being kept. And then after that of course, we'd go back to the barracks and some of the men of course would stay there, and some of the men would go to Honolulu.

Q: Were you a member of a flight crew?

A: Yes I was.

Q: What kind of airplane did you fly?

A: At first we had B-18's and then after having the B-18's for awhile after I was there, why then we got B-17C's.

Q: What sort of an airplane was the B-18?

A: Well, it was an old Martin two-engine, oh, you know, silver-colored aluminum, and it had Hamilton props, and I used to know the type of engines they had but they were smaller than the regular, like our 2800 engine.

Q: You said the first B-17's you flew on were the B-17C's. How did those compare with the later models of B-17's?

A: They just looked all together different. Uh, to my knowledge, the first B-17E's that came over there was during the Pearl Harbor attack. And at that time we had never seen them. I'm quite sure most of us had seen the pictures of them though. But they were different, the enfinage(??), the rear, was altogether different. And their profile was absolutely different from our old C's.

Q: What were you doing on the morning of December 7th?

A: I was sleeping in the first three greeters quarters right near the Pearl Harbor and Marine... The Marine barracks they were situated right across the fence from our house. And I was sleeping at that time.

And after all the racket and noise, well then I woke up and went outside and I could see then what was going on. But for a few minutes it was hard to contemplate on what I was seeing. But after a minute or so I realized thaat it wasn't play; that it was the real thing. I could see the sun under their wings and their insignias and I could see all the smoke and the ships burning in Pearl Harbor, because there were... you had a straight view from there.

And at that time, why several of the wives that were living around there, their husbands were already doing something apparently, because they came out and "I wonder how Fred is? I wonder... oh my God, I wonder how Jim is?" And about that time why, an ambulance came by and the driver came over and I asked myself and two others, Sgt. Sam Durrant(??) and Johnson, if we would go with him and help him. You know, help him load casualties.

And at that time the driver was by himself and he was bleeding; his face and his head and everything. He had already been wounded. So we immediately jumped in with him and went over to the parade ground and flight line and helped load injured people.

Most of them I knew; or a large part of them. And they were still joking, some of them with their legs missing and arms missing. And there were so many of them, that we more or less had to throw them up, you know, on top of each other; the ones that we thought we might be able to get to a hospital and save.

That was the worst part about it for me.

Q: Was there a lot of damage done also to the hangars and the planes?

A: Extensive damage was done to all hangars, the best I remember. And the barracks, the nice barracks, they were damaged considerably, the mess hall, and they used machine gun fire on the Hickam barracks. Oh, and then they did extensive damage with a bomb at Hickam Depot Kitchen, and it seems to me they did a job on the PX too. Some of it, you know, I don't recall exactly what it looked like.

Q: Did you take the wounded men over to the hospital when you were working on the ambulance?

A: Right.

Q: What was the scene like over at the hospital there?

A: Oh, it was all panic, you know. But everybody was cooperating and uh, the girls that were volunteering from Honolulu, they were all participating and doing a good job. And volunteers from the community, Honolulu, they were all doing an excellent job.

Q: Did you work on that ambulance all during the attack?

A: Uh, most of the day. And then I happened to be breathing so much smoke that I got to where it was very difficult to breathe and I had to go have treatment. I had pleurisy from breathing smoke. And that was the only extent of my... in other words, I wasn't injured in any other way.

Q: Right after the attack, was there a lot of rumors? a lot of tension in the air?

A: Oh yes, a lot of rumors, that they were coming back. They had two waves anyway. The first, you know, the torpedo bombers and the fighters, machine gun pursuit planes, and later on, the higher bombers came over and... Now let's see, did you just ask me a question about the...extent of the...

Q: I was just wondering about some of the rumors that might have been going around.

A: Oh, the rumors, yes. Oh, we heard all kinds of rumors you know, that they were coming back and they never came back of course. But I think we lost some of our own planes though, due to the fact that everybody was a little bit trigger happy.

Q: What's probably your most single vivid memory of the attack?

A: Oh, the uh... well, where I could see it real well was right there in the yard; right there by the Marine and Pearl Harbor, the Marine barracks, and Pearl Harbor. And the Marines were out in their barracks lawn, firing at all these planes with their rifles and machine guns.

Q: Did you ever see anybody hit anything?

A: Well uh, they were so low right there, and there were other planes dropping their torpedoes and what not at the ships... and machine gunning. I really didn't... I saw it looked like one or two that was smoking real bad. But there was so many Boom, Boom's that you don't know whether they crashed or not.

Q: What about any of the men at Hickam? Were any of them firing back?

A: Well, everybody that had anything in their pocket, rifle, or

.45 Colt, they were firing at the planes.

Q: Did you work at all on the clean up and the repair work that was done after the attack?

A: Uh, no, right after that, like I told you, I had the pleurisy and some people had me in bed, doctoring me all night with mustard packs or something, I don't know. And so I was doing that about two days and then I went back out to Hickam and started working at the Highway and Air Depot flight test. You know, where they'd repair the planes and then would test off them and turn them back over to the squadrons.

Q: Did you see any of those B-17's that came in during the attack?

A: No, I didn't see any of them on the ground. They were already on the ground, you know, when I left my house in the ambulance and we were busy. But I did... the best I remember, I did see two or three of them, you know, real low coming in. But I do remember that they were different from our C's; very distinct.

Q: What rank were you at the time?

A: I was Staff Sgt.

Q: Staff Sgt?

A: And I stayed over there at Hickam Air Depot for until January the 1st, '44, working in flight test. And during that time all of our planes were being brought back into Hickam, you know, that were damaged from down in the Marshall... you know, all the other islands during the Pacific War. And ATD they would repair them and test fly them and turn them over to crews to go back under, you know... down.

Q: Did you participate in the Battle of Midway at all?

A: No, I didn't. I flew down there a couple of times but wasn't involved in any battle.

Q: O.K., well, do you have anything else to add?

A: Oh, no, that's about it. You know, it's been so long ago, a lot of little details you forget. But something like that, you always retain something.

Q: Sure.

A: But it was quite a day.

Q: O.K., well thank you. I appreciate your taking the time to come by this morning.

A: Well, I'm glad to talk about it. It's very unusual that I

talk about it.

Q: O.K.